

# REPORT / RECOMMENDATION



**To:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**Agenda Item #:** IV. N.

**From:** Mark K. Nolan, AICP, Transportation Planner

**Action** ☒

**Date:** May 19, 2015

**Discussion** ☐

**Information** ☐

**Subject:** Resolution No. 2015-53 Authorizing Support for the Blake Road Corridor Study

## **Action Requested:**

Adopt the attached resolution.

## **Information / Background:**

On Aug. 19, 2014 WSB & Associates provided Council with an update of the Blake Road Corridor Study, which is led by the City of Hopkins in conjunction with Hennepin County and the Cities of Edina and St. Louis Park. At that time Council commented on and provided feedback regarding the early stages of the project. The Final Report is now complete, and the project team is requesting that Council review the recommendations and support the Study.

The purpose of the Study is to identify and plan for transportation improvements needed to support construction of the Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) line. The study area extends from 36th Street in St. Louis Park to Interlachen Boulevard in Edina. The study has included participation from the agencies listed above as well as Three Rivers Park District, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and with Southwest LRT Project Office. The study is guided by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with representatives from each of the partner agencies listed above.

Several different factors and goals served as both the basis for determining options and also in the scoring of the various options in the evaluation process. Considerations for traffic operations, safety, pedestrian and bicycle comfort, access, construction impacts, economic development potential, environmental impacts, cost, and long term maintenance all played a role.

Note that in the portion of the study area that most directly relates to the City of Edina – Blake Road between Interlachen Blvd and Excelsior Blvd – the road section is recommended to remain a two-lane section with on-road bike lanes. A sidewalk is recommended to be added on the west side of the roadway from Maloney Avenue to Excelsior Boulevard. The Sidewalk Facilities Map in Edina's Comprehensive Plan also indicates a future sidewalk in this area.

**Project Schedule**

Hopkins City Council accepts Blake Road Corridor Study	May 19, 2015
Hopkins enters into County cooperative agreement	Summer 2015
Select project design consultant	Summer 2015
Environmental Process	Fall 2015 – Spring 2016
Property Acquisition	Spring 2016 – Fall 2017
Private Utility Relocation	Spring 2017 – Fall 2017
Complete Construction Plans	Fall 2017
Begin Construction	Spring 2018
Complete Construction	Fall 2019

The Blake Road Corridor Study team is asking Council to adopt the attached resolution, supporting the recommendations of the Final Report. The Executive Summary of the Report is attached here for your review.

**Attachments:**

Resolution No. 2015-53  
Blake Road Corridor Final Report – Executive Summary



**RESOLUTION NO. 2015-53**  
**Authorizing Support for the Blake Road Corridor Study**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Hopkins, City of Edina, City of St. Louis Park, and Hennepin County have partnered to analyze the current and future needs of Blake Road; and,

**WHEREAS**, the study area along Blake Road extends from Interlachen Boulevard in Edina to north of State Trunk Highway 7 into St. Louis Park; and,

**WHEREAS**, Blake Road is County State Aid Highway No. 20 between Excelsior Boulevard (County State Aid Highway No. 3) and State Trunk Highway 7; and,

**WHEREAS**, recommendations for the improvement of Blake Road have been made and are contained in the Blake Road Corridor Study Final Report; and,

**WHEREAS**, the recommendations of the Blake Road Corridor Study will be used as the basis of design for future improvement and reconstruction of Blake Road; and,

**WHEREAS**, the recommendations of the Blake Road Corridor Study improve multimodal access to and from the future Southwest Light Rail Transit line for residents of the City of Edina.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the City of Edina endorses the recommendations of the Blake Road Corridor Study.

Dated: May 19, 2015

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debra A. Mangen, City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
James B. Hovland, Mayor

STATE OF MINNESOTA     )  
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN    )SS  
CITY OF EDINA            )

**CERTIFICATE OF CITY CLERK**

I, the undersigned duly appointed and acting City Clerk for the City of Edina do hereby certify that the attached and foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Edina City Council at its Regular Meeting of May 19, 2015, and as recorded in the Minutes of said Regular Meeting.

WITNESS my hand and seal of said City this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

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5/13/2015

# Blake Road Corridor Study

*Final Report*





# Blake Road Corridor Study

## *Final Report*

## Executive Summary

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### Purpose of study

The Blake Road corridor is expected to experience significant change over the next 20 years. A major catalyst for this change will be the opening of the Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT) and construction of a station at Blake Road. The LRT line is expected to open in 2019. In recognition of this change, the City of Hopkins and its partners initiated the Blake Road Corridor Study to address opportunities to:

- Provide better transportation opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus transit users
- Provide better connections and access to the planned light rail station at Blake Road for all modes
- Provide better connections and access to adjacent neighborhoods, commercial nodes, schools, and recreational facilities
- Provide transportation infrastructure to support redevelopment in and near the corridor that will enhance economic growth, community connectivity, and residential diversity.

As part of the study, the project team analyzed existing and future conditions, developed alternatives to improve conditions in the corridor, evaluated alternatives, and recommended a design concept for transportation improvements in the corridor. The public and affected agencies were involved throughout the study process.

### Study area

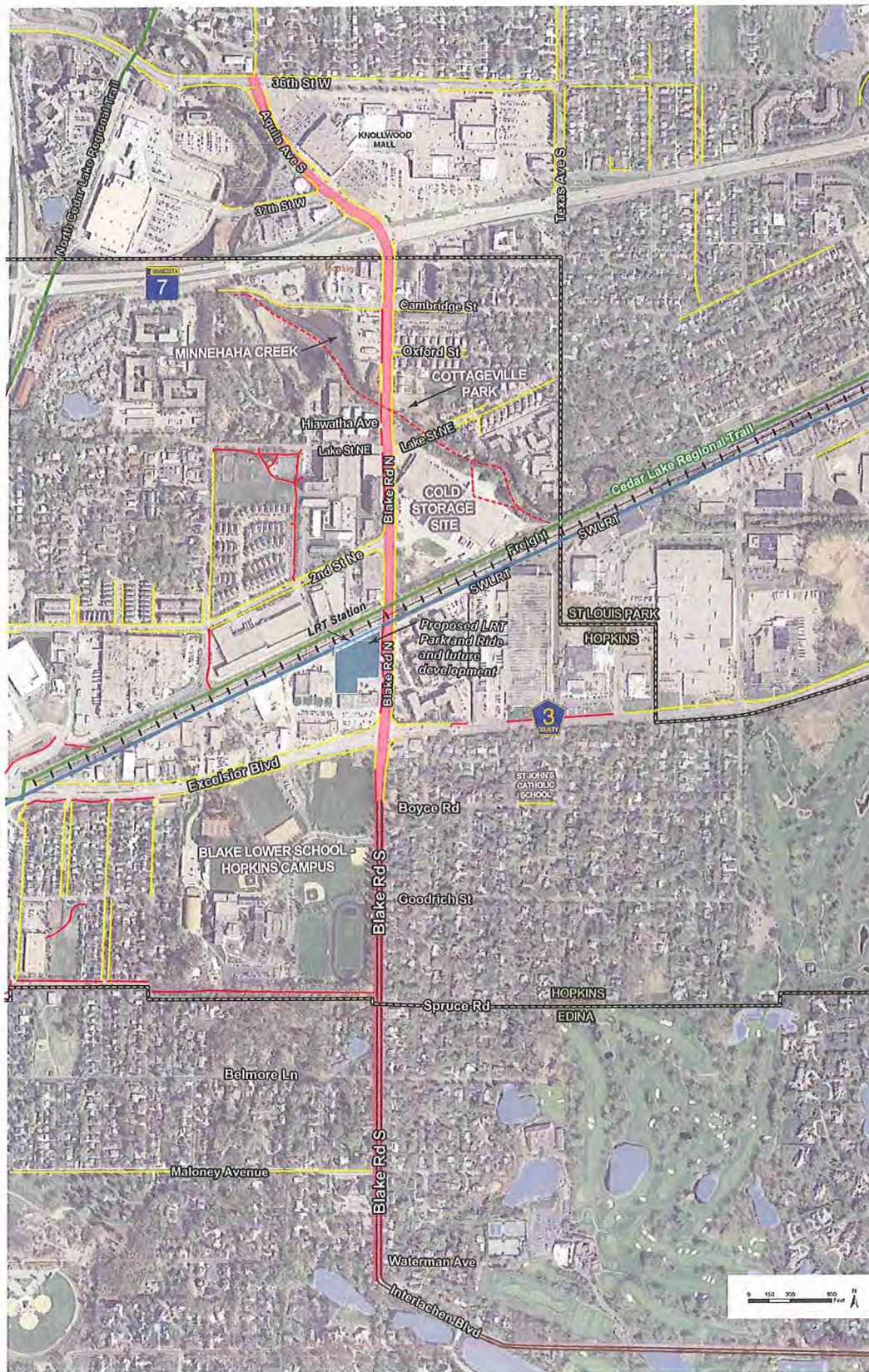
The project study area includes Blake Road between Interlachen Boulevard to Trunk Highway (TH) 7 and Aquila Avenue between TH 7 and 36th Street. **Figure 11** shows the location of the study area. The study corridor spans three cities: Edina (Interlachen Boulevard to Spruce Road), Hopkins (Spruce Road to TH 7), and St. Louis Park (TH 7 to 36th Street). While the name of the street changes at TH 7, the study area is referred to as the Blake Road Corridor for the purpose of this study.

### Study participants

The study was led by the City of Hopkins and guided by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with representatives from the following agencies:

- City of Hopkins
- City of Edina
- City of St. Louis Park
- Hennepin County
- SWLRT Project Office
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD)
- Three Rivers Park District
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)





## LEGEND

<span style="background-color: #ff6666; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Project Study Area	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid red; width: 20px;"></span> Bituminous Path	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid green; width: 20px;"></span> Existing Regional Trail	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid blue; width: 20px;"></span> On Street Bike Lane	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid black; width: 20px;"></span> Railroad
<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid yellow; width: 20px;"></span> Existing Sidewalks	<span style="border-bottom: 2px dashed red; width: 20px;"></span> Proposed Trail	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid black; width: 20px;"></span> Municipal Boundary	<span style="border-bottom: 2px solid blue; width: 20px;"></span> SWLRT	



## Study goals

Early in the study process, the TAC developed study goals to guide the development and evaluation of alternatives for the Blake Road Corridor. The goals of the study included the following:

- Facilitate access to the future Southwest LRT Blake Road station
- Create a roadway that is comfortable, safe, and functional for all transportation modes: pedestrian, bicycle, motor vehicle, freight, and transit
- Support redevelopment and make the roadway a place that is comfortable and active
- Protect and enhance natural resources near the roadway including Minnehaha Creek
- Improve connections between the roadway and nearby neighborhoods, parks, and trails
- Improve connections to Minnehaha Creek and nearby trails

## Public involvement

The public involvement process included open houses, neighborhood meetings, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and meetings with elected officials. Three open house meetings were held as part of the planning process. Notice of each open house was posted on city websites and mailed to residents and property owners along the corridor. Input from each meeting was documented and provided to the TAC.

The project team reached out to neighborhood residents and property owners through additional meetings and attendance at events. Project staff attended an event in Cottageville Park, met with Westside Village Apartments management and residents, and met with representatives from the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative and the Blake School.

Throughout the project, the City of Hopkins maintained a project webpage for the Blake Road Corridor Study. The webpage listed meeting announcements and materials from each open house. Edina and St. Louis Park also posted meeting announcements on their city websites.

A TAC was convened at the beginning of the project to ensure that all interested agency stakeholders were involved in the study process. The TAC was composed of staff from the agency partners listed under Study Participants. The TAC met monthly to guide the study process, review and discuss technical analyses, provide direction on alternatives development and evaluation, and work together to determine the preferred alternative.

The project team presented study progress to elected officials at several stages during the project. Staff provided updates at Edina, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins City Council Work Sessions in August and September 2014. Staff also presented the preferred alternative at an April 14, 2015 Hopkins City Council Work Session.

## Evaluation Process

The project team developed several alternatives to address the goals of the project. These alternatives addressed roadway width and number of lanes, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, pedestrian crossings, and intersection design. The alternatives were evaluated based on the following criteria:



- **Traffic operations:** Ability to provide sufficient capacity for the existing and forecast volumes on Blake Road and cross streets.
- **Safety and conflict points:** Ability to reduce crashes on Blake Road and minimize conflict points between corridor users.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle crossings - delay, safety, and directness:** Measure of the distance of pedestrian and bicycle crossings, safety of crossings, and ability to directly link pedestrians and bicyclists to destinations in the corridor.
- **Bicycle facility safety and comfort for likely users:** Ability for the bicycle facility to be comfortable and safe for a wide range of bicyclists.
- **Pedestrian safety and comfort:** Measure of the amount of separation the facility provides between pedestrians, vehicles, and bicyclists.
- **Business/Residential Access:** Measure of how many vehicle movements are preserved to and from businesses and residences on Blake Road.
- **Right of way impacts – Roadway cross-section width:** Measure of how much right of way impacts are anticipated.
- **Economic development:** Related to right of way impacts, access, traffic operations, and bicycle and pedestrian enhancements.
- **Construction cost:** Estimated construction cost based on width of roadway.
- **Maintenance costs and ease of maintenance:** Measure of how easily the bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be maintained.
- **Environmental:** Ability to minimize and enhance environmental impacts adjacent to the roadway.

## Recommendations

The evaluation of alternatives led to the following recommendations for the corridor. These recommendations are broken out by segment.

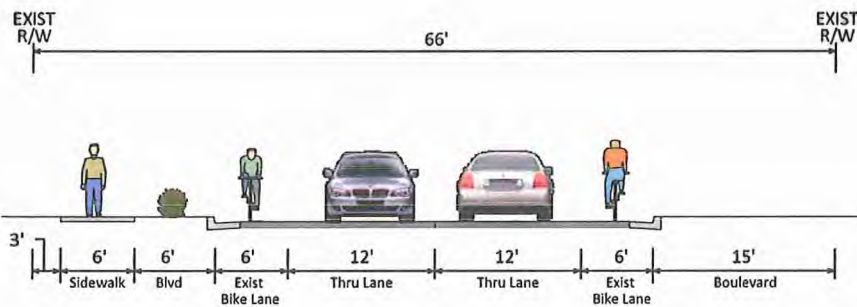
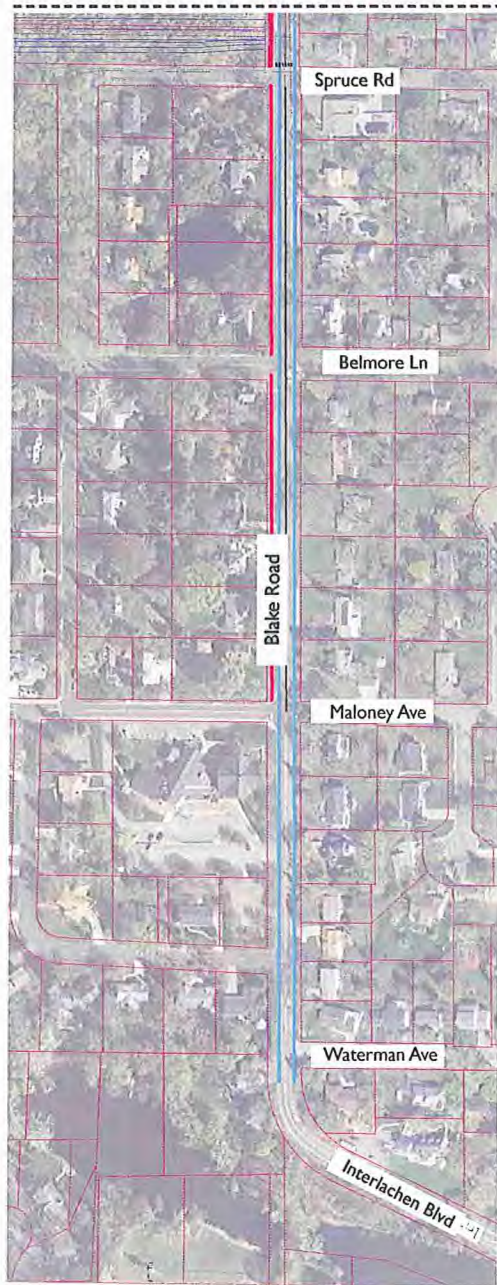
### Interlachen to Excelsior Boulevard

**Figure i2** shows the preferred alternative for Interlachen to Excelsior Boulevard. The recommended cross-section in this segment has two lanes with on-road bike lanes and sidewalk on the west side. The primary improvement in this section is the addition of a sidewalk on the west side of Blake Road. The sidewalk would provide a facility for pedestrians from the residential areas south of Excelsior Boulevard, and provide connection to Excelsior Boulevard, the future Blake Road LRT station and other areas on Blake Road north of Excelsior Boulevard. It is recommended to maintain the existing bike lanes on Blake Road south of Excelsior Boulevard. Existing and projected traffic volumes are low enough that the bike lane will continue to be a comfortable facility for many bicyclists.

### Excelsior Boulevard to TH 7

**Figure i3** shows the preferred alternative for Blake Road between Excelsior Boulevard and TH 7. The recommended cross-section in this segment is a four lane divided roadway with multi-use

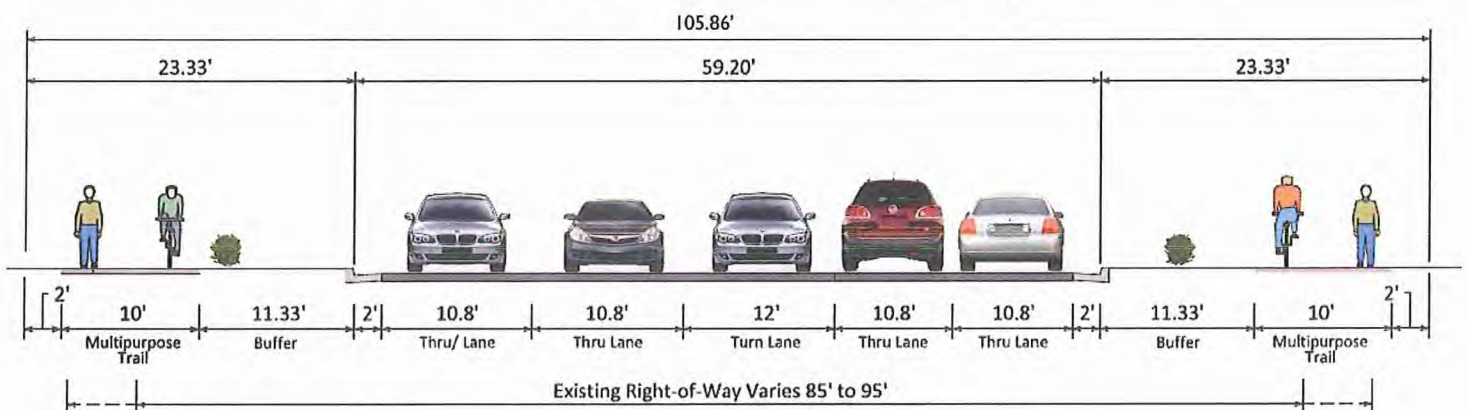
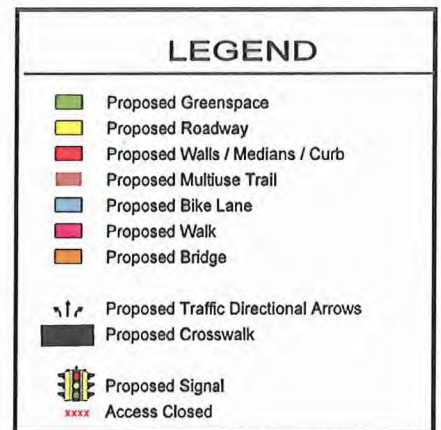
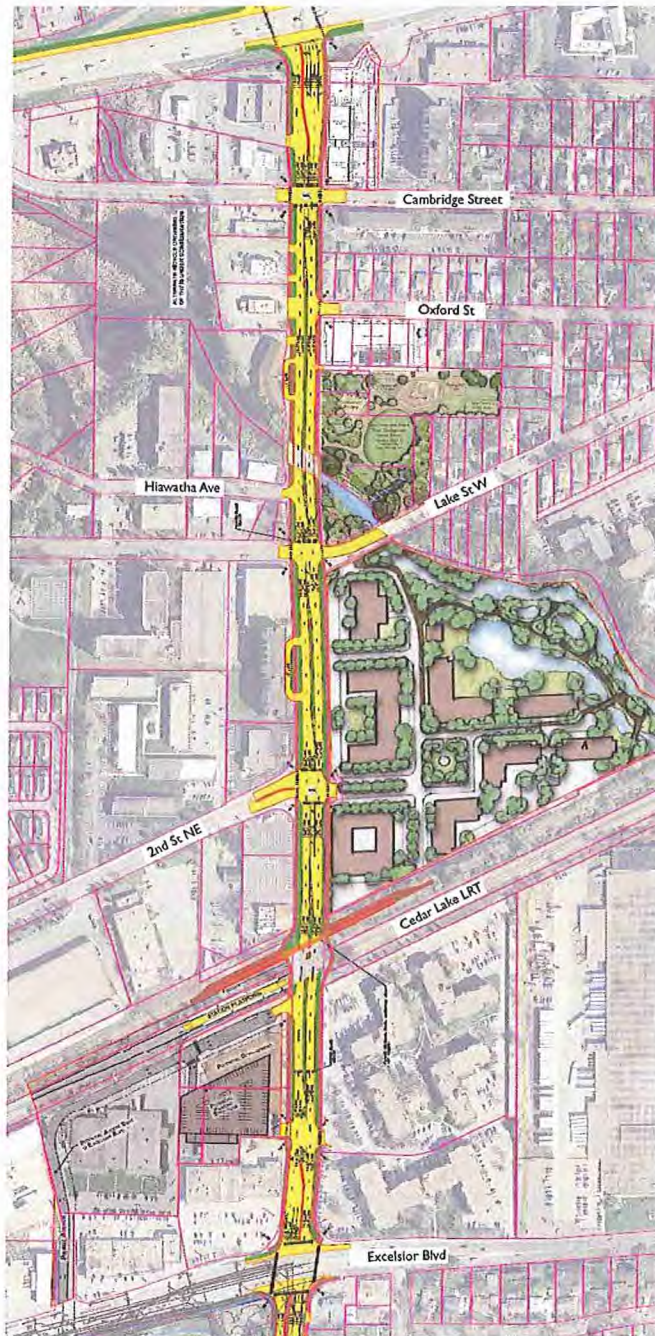




## LEGEND

- Proposed Greenspace
- Proposed Roadway
- Proposed Walls / Medians / Curb
- Proposed Multiuse Trail
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Proposed Walk
- Proposed Bridge
- Proposed Traffic Directional Arrows
- Proposed Crosswalk
- Proposed Signal
- Access Closed







trail on both sides of Blake Road. The 10 foot multi-use path on both sides of Blake Road will be a combined facility for bikes and pedestrians.

Landscape and hardscape treatments were considered in this section during the evaluation phase to make sure that adequate space was provided to accommodate the urban design treatments that will create a friendly environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Design and treatments along the boulevard and the multi-use trail will be developed further during the final design phase of this project. It is also recommended that the City of Hopkins consider zoning requirements for a green buffer strip between the multi-use trail and the adjacent properties to enhance the bicycle and pedestrian corridor and separate it from adjacent parking lots and buildings. It is also recommended that the overhead power lines in the corridor be put underground to further enhance the pedestrian and bicycle corridor.

Detailed consideration was given to pedestrian crossings and intersections in the corridor. Intersection and crossing recommendations are summarized below:

- **Excelsior Boulevard intersection:** Recommendation to provide two southbound left turn lanes to provide adequate storage between the median opening at the West Side Village access and Excelsior Boulevard. Combined through and right-turn lanes on southbound Blake Road and northbound Blake Road are recommended in order to minimize crossing distance on Blake Road at the intersection.
- **Median Opening at West Side Village Access:** Full access recommended at this location to support existing development and future redevelopment.
- **Pedestrian Crossing between Excelsior Boulevard and Railroad Tracks:** A marked pedestrian crossing with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) is recommended north of the West Side Village Access where there is a full width median.
- **Cedar Lake Trail Crossing:** Three Rivers Park District is proposing a grade separation at the Cedar Lake Trail crossing of Blake Road. It is recommended that no marked at grade crossing be provided where the Cedar Lake trail intersects with the Blake Road multi-use trail.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Street Intersection:** A signalized intersection is recommended. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Street signal will be interconnected with the railroad signal to avoid trapping vehicles on the LRT/railroad tracks.
- **Lake Street Intersection:** Side-street stop control is recommended. A marked pedestrian crossing with RRFB is recommended on the north side of the intersection.
- **Minnehaha Creek Bridge:** It is recommended that the Minnehaha Creek Bridge be retained.
- **Oxford Street:** It is recommended that the median extend through the intersection of Oxford Street and Blake Road. Oxford Street would have right in and right out access on Blake Road. Businesses on the west side of Blake Road would also have right in and right out access.
- **Cambridge Street:** No change in the lane configuration or traffic control is proposed at this intersection. The intersection of Cambridge Street and Blake Road will be signalized.

- **TH 7:** The intersection of Blake Road/Aquila Avenue and TH 7 is recommended to be modified to add a second left turn lane for northbound left turns on Blake Road and southbound left turns on Aquila Avenue. In addition the southbound free right on Aquila Avenue will be modified so that right-turns are made closer to TH 7. Modification of the southbound free right will be completed as part of a separate MnDOT project. A right-turn lane will be added for southbound right turns. It is recommended that the radius on all corners of the intersection be reduced to reduce right turn speeds and minimize pedestrian crossing distances.

### TH 7 to 36th Street

**Figure i4** shows the preferred alternative for Aquila Avenue between TH 7 and 36th Street. The recommended cross-section in this segment is a four-lane divided roadway with multi-use trail on both sides of Aquila Avenue. The roadway section in this segment will have a minimum 4 median at left turn lanes, 10.8 foot through lanes, a 4 foot median, a 7 foot boulevard and a 8 foot trail. This section will require acquisition of some right of way. No specific recommendations have been made regarding landscape or hardscape in this section

The 36th Street intersection is recommended to be signalized and will have the same lane configuration as the current intersection. The 37th Street intersection is currently signalized. A roundabout was considered as an alternative at this intersection. The City of St. Louis Park will continue to evaluate both alternatives for this intersection.

### Cost Estimate

The estimated construction costs for the improvements are approximately \$11.7 million in current dollars (2015). A 20% contingency is included in the construction costs. The estimate includes approximately \$2.3 million for engineering and administration costs. The estimate does not currently include any costs for city utilities, undergrounding the overhead power lines or for right-of-way. The estimated construction costs are based on conceptual design and will change as more detail design is completed.

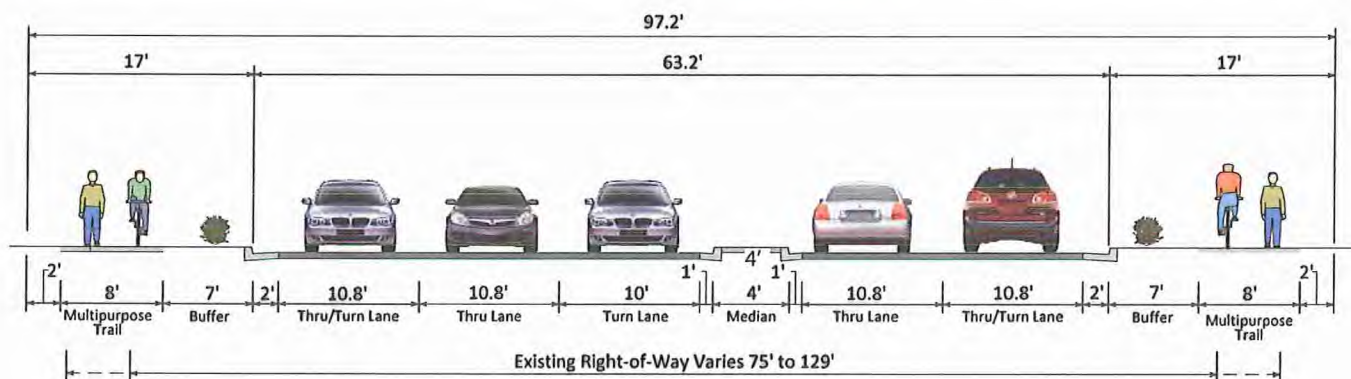
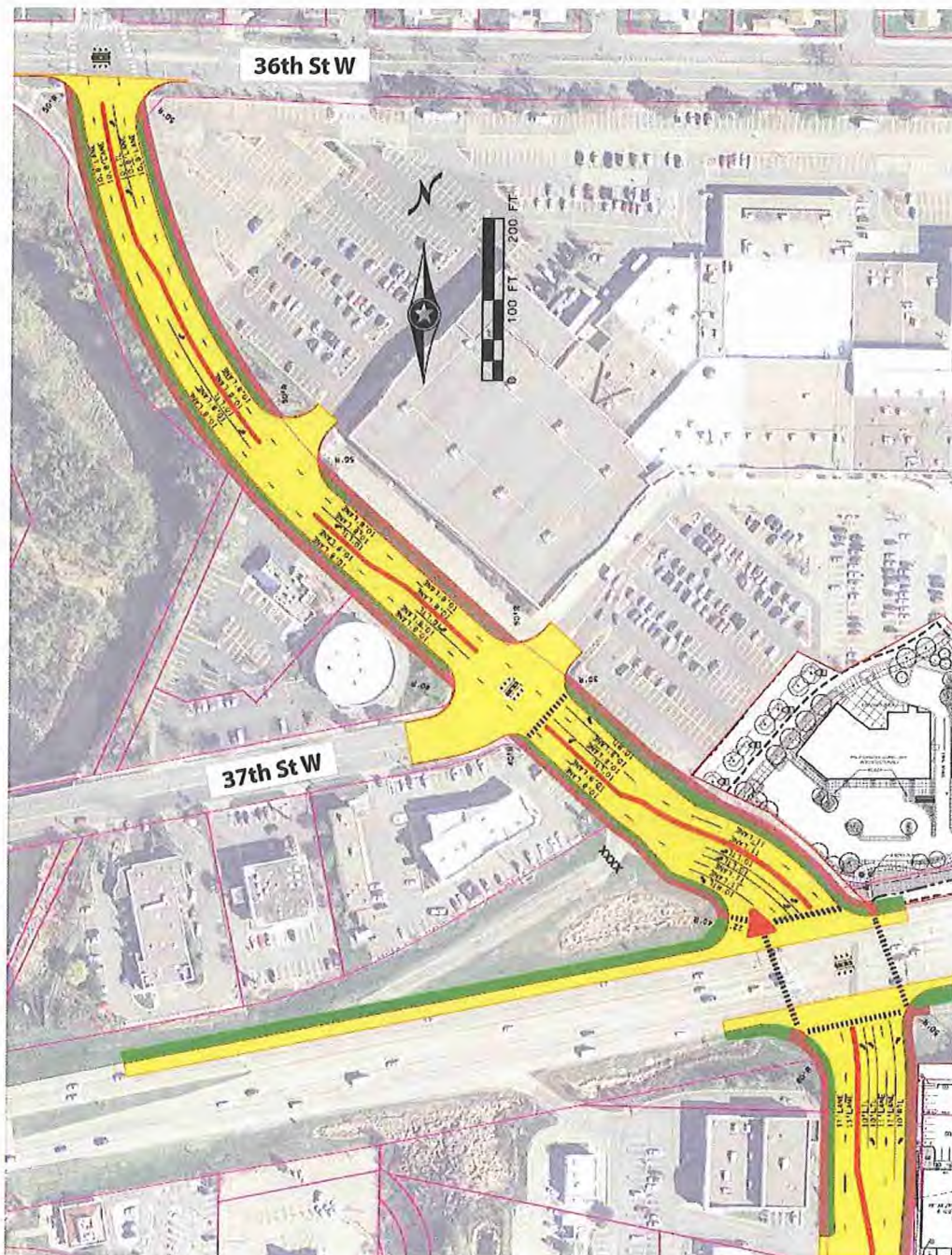
### Next Steps

The recommendations in this study represent a concept design for the corridor that addresses the goals of the various stakeholders. There is significant additional design that is required before final costs and right of way can be determined. Additional study is needed of the utilities in the corridor to determine what should be replaced and the location for the utilities. As indicated earlier more detail also needs to be developed for the urban design elements of the corridor. The next step in the engineering process is to complete final design for the corridor which will help establish final construction limits and right of way needs.

### Environmental Review

This project is subject to state environmental regulations and potentially subject to federal environmental regulations depending on the funding sources. Either a Project Memo or Environmental Assessment would be required if the project receives federal funding. It is recommended that a state EAW be completed for the project.







## Funding Sources

A variety of funding sources will be utilized to construct this project. Local funding sources could include:

- City of Hopkins: Local utilities and undergrounding of overhead utilities on Blake Road between Excelsior Boulevard and TH 7
- City of St. Louis Park: Aquila Avenue Improvements
- City of Edina: Sidewalk improvements in Edina
- Hennepin County: Blake Road between Excelsior Boulevard and TH 7
- MnDOT: TH 7 intersection – Potentially Cooperative Agreement Funds

In addition, federal funding sources will be pursued and could include:

- TIGER Grant: Federal funding for multi-modal transportation projects that generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation. The minimum federal funding per project is \$10 million.
- Transportation Alternatives Program: Federal funds administered through the Metropolitan Council that could be used for multi-use trail and aesthetic enhancements.

## Coordination with other projects

The design of this project needs to be coordinated with several other projects that will be designed and potentially constructed in the same time frame. This includes:

- Southwest LRT and Blake Road Station Area
- Cedar Lake Regional Trail grade separation
- Cold Storage Site Development Plans
- Highway 7 intersection improvements
- City of Hopkins local street reconstruction